



Carrera terror

For Porsche purists,
it's frightfully right

Story by Andy Dudash
Photos by Phil Berg



Danny Sullivan:
Driving a
Porsche to
slow down.

It is after midnight, cold and dark, and darker yet is the car, a black-on-black-in-black Porsche 911 Carrera, whale tail and all, blasting through a downtown Detroit back street at 120 miles per hour. The passenger, clinging for dear life, wonders what is happening to him.

Reassuringly, the driver says, "It's OK. I'm familiar with the course."

And he is. The driver is Danny Sullivan, who knows this street as part of the Detroit Grand Prix course.

Sullivan drives race cars for a living. He drives cars like the Porsche to slow down. So when Sullivan was in town for a few days, we asked him to help us test and evaluate the new 911.

The best thing about the 1984 Porsche 911 Carrera is not that it is fast (which it is), nor that it is quick (which it is), nor that it is a resurrection of the venerable Carrera name. The best thing is that Porsche is still building the 911 after 20 years, and you can still go out and buy a new one.

Obviously, the car has changed considerably since its introduction. Increased engine displace-

ment and power, chassis refinements, a more aggressive look, and greater creature comforts were all part of the evolution of the 911. But it is basically the same car. The visual cues and the sensation you get driving the car are unmistakably traditional Porsche.

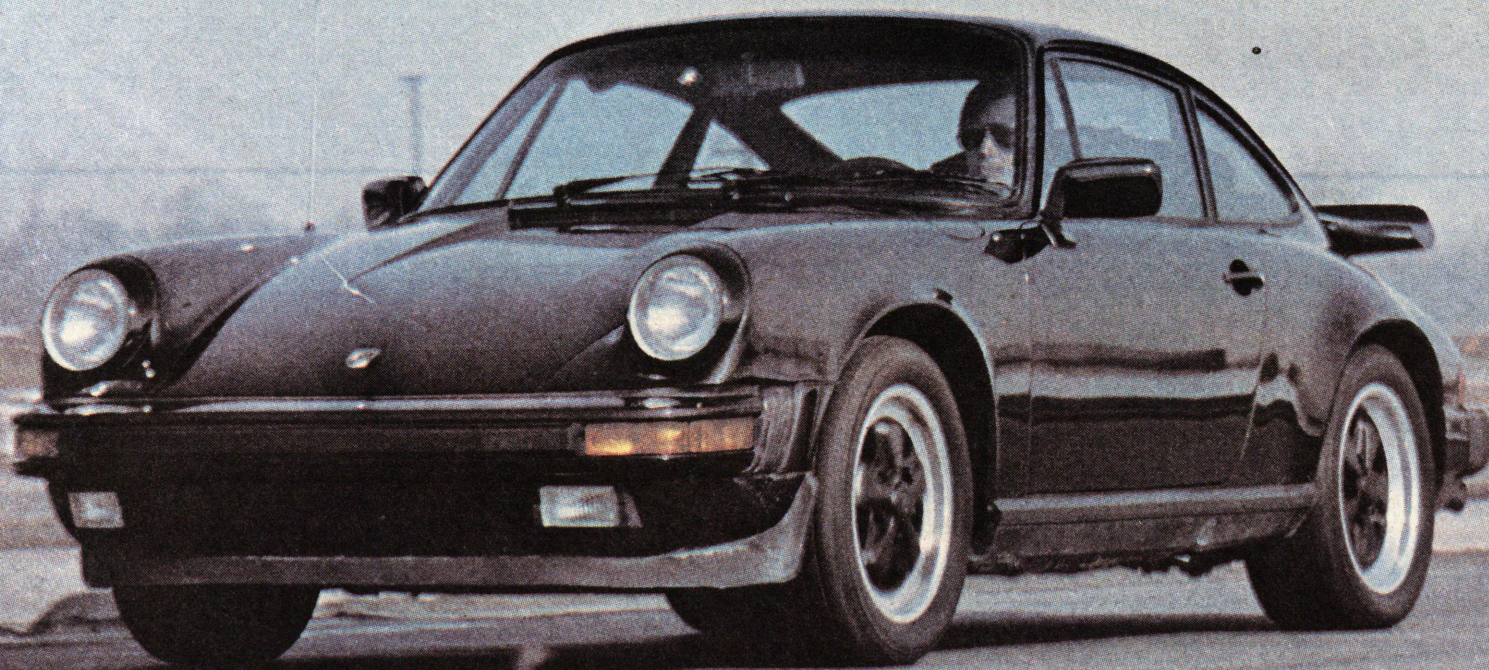
And to a lot of people, the 911 is *the* Porsche. Even with up-to-date and refined models like the 944 and 928 available, Porsche still sold over 5,600 911s in 1983.

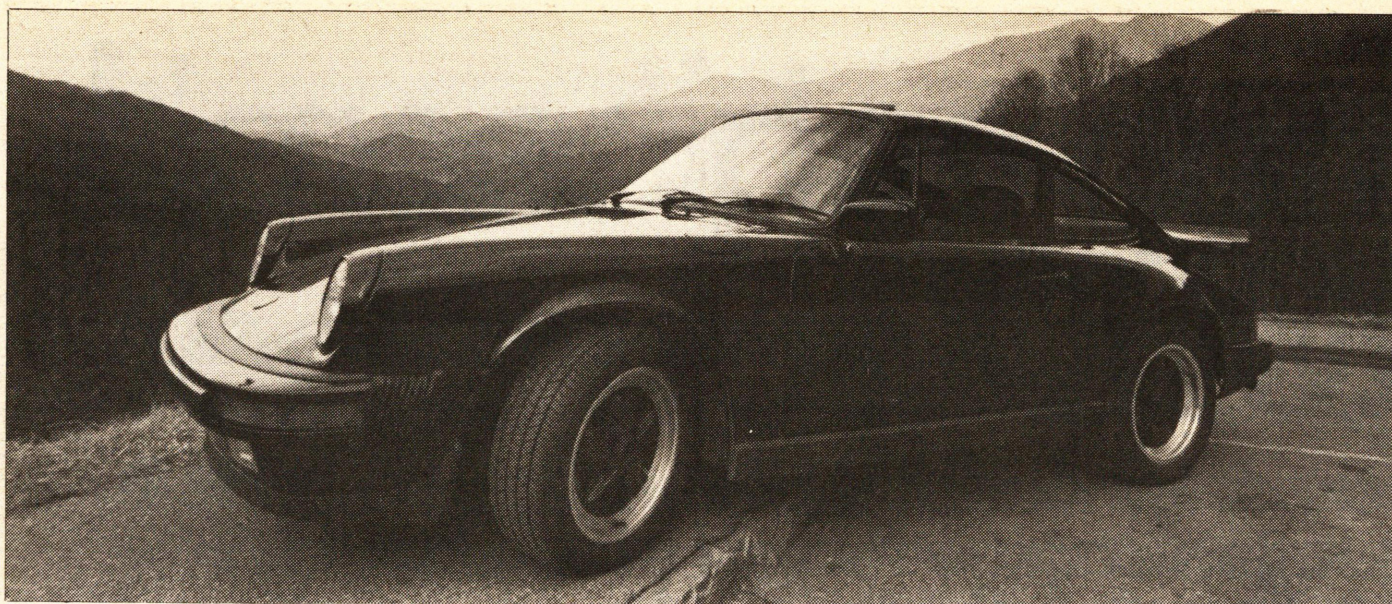
But what does the new Carrera offer, besides tradition, and how does it stack up against the other Porsche offerings? Here's what Sullivan had to say . . .

The 911 Carrera is exceptionally quick, passing performance is phenomenal, and the engine's considerable power is transferred to the road better than in the front-engined Porsches. On hard acceleration the RPM rise very quickly, and the inclusion of a rev limiter was a good idea. Compared to the front-engined Porsches, the 911 is not as comfortable, and is a more difficult car to drive hard.

The ride is noticeably stiffer than in the 928, and the suspension transmits bumps through the body and to the seats with minimal damping.

Continued on Page 14





World's most authentic replicar

By Phil Berg

Just what is this car?

Even people who can't tell a BMW from a Lancia from a Mercedes know what a Porsche is. It's a 911. You know the people, like your cousin who just bought a Tempo because the seats had a nice color. If you say Porsche, they know what you mean. They have no idea that the machine is sprung by torsion bars, even if they know what a torsion bar is. They thought the air-cooled motor took a hike with the Beetle. They thought rear-engines were unsafe at any speed, and they probably don't know the car still has a power plant out back. But they know what a Porsche is.

There are a lot of Porsche drivers around who share the same traits: They don't know how a 911 works but are familiar with its effect. This group includes those who somehow stumbled onto a material success, who were right there when the shares of the new American Dream were doled out, and who follow trends of Western culture that keep the celebrated in demand and the *Esquires* in print, know very well what a Porsche can do for them. Those with gold rash on the neck and skin cancer on the navel still put up with the unusual and obsolete difficulty of the controls of a 911. The 911 is a rotten *boulevardier*, but people with gaudy money still cruise there for the effect.

And car nuts like us, we like the 911. We're at once embarrassed and enthralled by this machine. We're puzzled and confused and downright infatuated by the part of our minds that this car, more than any other, has stolen.

There are other things a 911 is besides puzzling. The 911, this year called Carrera, is one of the fastest cars to burn down world roads, and turns as many heads as any street-able MX missile. There is something about the looks, the stance and the way it crouches down to the pull of gravity, that makes it an other-than-mortal impression.

What makes it so well-known among the non-car people and gives it such immediate status? It is not the fastest four-wheeled conveyance in the world, or the meanest-looking or the best handling, or at an end of the cost spectrum (\$32,000) that would invite exclusivity. But it is such an eye-striking automobile. It has more far-reaching effects than any other GT car has ever had, and

maybe, with a four-wheel-drivetrain, the likes of which won this year's Paris-Dakar enduro, ever will have.

Though this is the 20th year of its production, the 911 will probably still be around when you can be beamed to your office in the morning and catch a shuttle to your summer moon home that night.

We know what the 911 is, and we know how it works. And we also know that even though it came here in 1964, its design and refinement can be traced back to the mid-1920s. This statement takes a bit of qualification, however. You could say the T-Bird is just a refinement of the Model T, with a front-engine, solid rear-drive layout, and you'd be stretching it. But when you look at Dr. Ferdinand Porsche's plans for a people's car in the 1920s, you cannot deny the resemblance of this present-day barn-storming GT to the Volkswagen Beetle. The pedal cluster is one of the first clues you get to the origin of the machine. Then the light notchiness of the shifter pushing that rod in the center tunnel into the pointed front end of the transaxle tells you it came from a Beetle. The feel of the steering and the balance of the drivetrain arrears is another clue. Even the heater controls and numerous other fasteners and trim and hinges inside and out reek of mechanical genes from the VW strain.

There are no interchangeable single parts between the two cars, but as a whole there is more than just a "he's-got-your-eyes-and-hair" connection.

Is that what embarrasses us? The puny status of the Beetle among the learned car nuts and the high esteem of its direct descendant, this 911, make us as uneasy as we would be if we discovered the mailman is our father.

It's not just that the structure of the car is *similar*; it's the *same*. A floorpan design, which no other car shares, with the body bolted on, a small tunnel for longitudinal strength and an engine and transmission bolted to a fork in the frame are unique to only the Beetlecars and the 911s.

These descriptions of the nuts and bolts of the 911 tell us what the car is. But they don't tell us why it is so popular, and why it causes anxiety for us while it interacts with the rest of the objects in the world.

It interacts with the road better

than almost anything else you can drive today. It sticks and goes.

What follows are some real-life experiences that tell you something about the 911 . . .

A lady from Dayton, whose husband pulled their Buick off the road next to the sprinkling mountain stream in the state park, eschewed the chance to take pictures of hubby and scenery. Instead, she aimed her Instamatic at the Porsche.

Another lady, a real estate promoter dressed in heels and fur at the Texaco station, offered a free three-day, two-night resort vacation to the Porsche drivers, who were parked at the *self-serve* island. "And bring your little car," she said.

This is a 911 parked, silent, and just *presuming* itself an automobile. Actually putting it in motion by another touristy, scenic mountain spot, made a driver of a normal sedan, clad in a shiny silver "Porsche" jacket, walk by with his head held low, unable to look at the very object whose crest he was displaying all over his shoulders and chest.

How can a car do this to rational beings?

What's more, who cares? So we have to go about our lives with this irritant under our skin. What matters is the 911 does more than perhaps any other car when it comes to making an impression. And that includes the impression we want to make on ourselves when we're alone on the road, peeling off miles of pavement and throwing them behind us. The driver plays such an active role in moving the car along that it feels like you're actually propelling the car by yourself, without the aid of gasoline. There are five shock absorbers in the car, one at each wheel and the fifth sitting in the driver's seat. This is probably the only street car in the world that can never be driven by remote control. There are so many inputs and variables that have to be processed from the steering wheel and pedals, and mostly from the pit of the seat, that a Commodore 64 would run out of memory before it could drive one to the local grocery store.

This is what makes the 911 leave such an impression in car-guy minds. This and the fact everyone knows what it is when they see one on the street. The free weekend vacation is just icing on the cake.



Carrera terror

Continued from Page 11

Also, the 911 is the only high-performance rear-engine production car around today, and people are not used to the handling characteristics of such cars. Although the Carrera's cornering performance is impressive, steering forces are high, and at speed there is a lightness—a floating feeling—from the front end. When you encounter bumps, the feedback through the steering wheel is sharp, and front-end camber changes can be clearly felt. With all the weight and power concentrated at the rear, the cornering limits can be reached quickly, but recovery is more difficult than in the more neutral-handling front-engined Porsches, in which the limits are reached more gradually.

Sullivan more or less scorched the earth with the car. Cruising out to Adrian, Mich., the home of Doug Shierson Racing, to get a custom seat fitted to his body for the CART/PPG Indy car he will be racing this year, Sullivan punched the Carrera up to an indicated 135 MPH (not quite the claimed top speed of 146 MPH, but fast nonetheless). Overall, Sullivan says the car is well-suited for the die-hard Porsche enthusiast who can appreciate, and handle, the performance this car has to offer.

The car's spec sheet is impeccable. All the right hardware is there. The 911 Carrera is powered by the now-famous air-cooled boxer six that has moved Porsches for ages. This year the displacement has been increased 200cc to 3.2 liters, and along with revisions in port and combustion chamber shape, a fully integrated electronic ignition and fuel injection system (similar to the Porsche 944 system) have been added, resulting in a maximum power output of 200 horsepower. Porsche claims that these changes have also resulted in a 20 percent increase in mileage over 1983, as reflected in the EPA testing. Yes, more power and better fuel economy.

The suspension remains the traditional (there's that word again) Porsche setup, fully independent with front MacPherson struts with torsion bars and 20mm stabilizer bar, and rear semi-trailing arms with torsion bars and 18mm stabilizer bar. The brakes are four-wheel vented power-assisted discs with diameters of 11.1-inch front and 11.4-inch rear. Our test car was also fitted with the optional wheel-and-tire combination composed of 6x16-inch front and 7x16-inch rear forged alloy wheels clad with 205/55 VR 16 front and 225/50 VR 16 rear Goodyear NCTs. Power is directed to the wheels through a full-synchro five-speed transaxle.

The hardware list is impressive, and the car does not hide what it has from the world, or the driver. One look at the car, even a car as familiar in shape as this one, clearly indicates its purpose. And that purpose is to go fast.

The 911 Carrera is quick—quick in the extreme. Even the factory-claimed zero-60 MPH time of 6.3 seconds doesn't convey how quick the car *feels*. The reason for this is the engine's power curve. In the case of the Carrera engine, this full-power curve is more an inclined straight line than a curve, with the top being

Continued on Page 16

Porsche 911

Continued from Page 14

at about 5,900 RPM. This linearity of increasing power produces such an increase in the rate at which speed is gained as the RPM rise that it literally plasters your body harder and harder to the seat. The sense of performance is enhanced by the heightening roar from the engine, a sound that is peculiar to the air-cooled Porsche engine, and music to any sports car lover's ear.

Revving to the limiter in second gear puts the speedometer in the mid-60s, and in third well over 90 MPH, so passing is, ah, no problem.

Once up to speed, highway cruising is composed, with the ride on the hard side. Engine and wind noise is acceptable, and the engine revs at an indicated 70 MPH in fifth gear are only 2,600.

Porsche has indeed done a fantastic job on the engine; the proof is in the performance. Squeezing 200 horsepower out of a normally aspirated air-cooled 3.2-liter engine is quite a feat these days, especially in light of emission controls and low octane fuels, but producing high fuel economy at the same time requires real engineering magic. Our experience with the Carrera reaffirms that the claimed mileage figures are generally accurate. In fact, on a trip composed of 25 percent spirited suburban driving and the rest highway cruising, we actually got 26 MPG. For a car that performs so well, that's excellent.

Also excellent are the brakes. The large ventilated discs all around are very powerful, fade is non-existent, and directional stability during hard braking is very good. The system is not over-boosted, and precise modulation is possible.

We found the handling of the car both pleasing and challenging; driven conservatively, the car is easy to handle. But driven aggressively it is a real handful, and outside the experience level of most of the drivers who buy one.

Is it a good car? It is for those who are willing to accept the car's shortcomings in order to experience its outstanding performance and the aura surrounding the car. For those willing to accept or overlook the dated design, the notchy transmission linkage, the weird clutch pedal that's hard on the rebound, the stiff ride and the tricky handling; who are thin enough to fit into the seats; who must have *this* Porsche, because the water-cooled ones just don't make it, then this is a *great* car. The Carrera is (need we say it one last time?) a traditional Porsche. More powerful and more refined, but underneath it all, it is still the same old 911.

And for the generation out there that is infatuated with this car, for whom a mere glimpse of that classic profile sends shivers down the spine, Porsche has seen fit to let the love affair continue.



Porsche 911 Carrera

Base Price: \$31,950
Price as tested: \$37,075
 (including options listed: AM/FM stereo radio/cassette, \$600; cruise control, \$320; black headliner, \$70; sunroof, \$940; extended steering wheel hub, \$40; sport seats, \$250; 16-inch forged alloy wheels and tires, \$1,580; front and rear spoilers, \$1,325).

DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase (in.): 89.5
Length (in.): 168.9
Width (in.): 65.0
Height (in.): 51.6
Track, F/R (in.): 53.9/54.3
Curb weight (lbs.): 2,756

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Head room, F/R (in.): 35.2/31.7
Shoulder room, F/R (in.): 49.2/49.6
Hip room, F/R (in.): 48.4/37.8
Leg room, F/R (in.): 43.1/14.6
Cargo volume (cu. ft.): 4.4 (trunk)
Fuel capacity (gal.): 21.0

POWERTRAIN:

Layout: Rear-engine, rear-drive
Engine type: Six-cylinder, horizontally opposed, air-cooled, SOHC per bank

Displacement (cu. in./liters): 193.2/3.164
Compression ratio: 9.5:1
Horsepower @ RPM: 200 @ 5,900
Torque @ RPM (lbs. ft.): 185 @ 4,800
Fuel delivery: Electronic fuel injection
Redline: 6,300 RPM
0-60 (secs.): 6.3
Transmission type: Five-speed full synchro

Gear ratios:

I 3.18:1
II 1.78:1
III 1.26:1
IV 1.00:1
V 0.79:1
Final drive ratio: 3.875:1

CHASSIS:

Suspension:

Front: MacPherson struts with longitudinal torsion bars and stabilizer bar.
Rear: Semi-trailing arms with transverse torsion bars and stabilizer bar.

Steering type: Rack-and-pinion
Overall ratio: 17.78:1
Turns, lock-to-lock: 3.0
Turning circle (ft.): 34.0

Brake system: Four-wheel power-assisted ventilated discs

Wheels: 6x16-inch front, 7x16-inch rear forged alloy

Tires: 205/55 VR 16 front, 225/50 VR 16 rear

EPA fuel economy: 20 city, 32 hwy.
Fuel economy as tested: 26 overall

